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THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS

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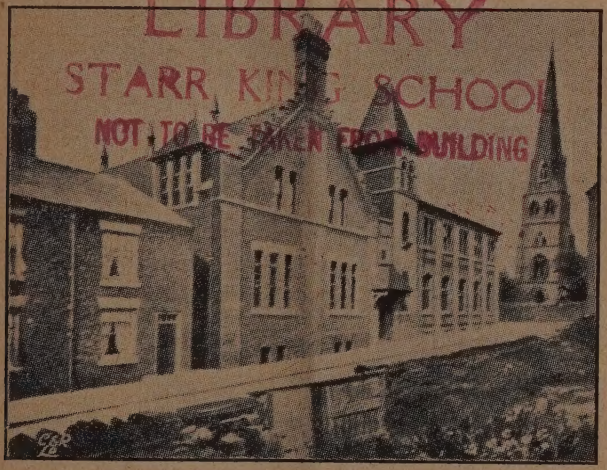


The present School and Chapel

UNITARIAN SCHOOLS

Gee Cross

By J. Harry Smith

Before the Rev. James Brooks settled at Hyde Chapel in 1806 he was told that the congregation "had no minister in view, but they wanted one that would teach a school." They desired the new minister to follow the example of his predecessor, the Rev. Bristowe Cooper who had kept a school in the parsonage and numbered among his pupils one who became the Member of Parliament for Northampton. Hyde Chapel parsonage had housed a school before the coming of these minister-teachers. Catherine Mercer, the parson's daughter, opened a school for children in the 'sixties of the 18th Century.

When Brooks settled at Gee Cross the village already had a school, the "Hyde Village School," built about 1777, situated in Ralph Fold Lane, Gee Cross, erected by contributions from the inhabitants of Hyde and Werneth. Hyde Chapel people had a lively interest in the founding of the Village School, in which it was agreed their Sunday School should meet, and by providence a majority of the early trustees the Chapel for some years had practical control of the School. As a pioneer effort the Village School had its merits, but a note in the diary of James Brooks' suggests

that things were not as he would like them to be. Under date July 24th, 1839, he writes: "Met with the trustees of Hyde School at the Inn, to choose a schoolmaster. Many applications, and some of them very respectfully recommended, but was surprised at the bad spelling and grammar in some of the letters written by the applicants. The office of schoolmaster is, I think, worse filled and less respectable than formerly."

By the middle of the 19th Century the Village School was in a state of dilapidation, "it was badly furnished, damp and cold, and inconvenient." The increase of the population pointed to the need for a more commodious building, and the first plan was to raise the Village School another storey and to put it into good repair. That plan, however, was unacceptable to Hyde Chapel people. Already more of the trustees belonged to other religious denominations, a fact which they considered as a threat to the interest of their Sunday School which met in the building, to the large measure of control they had hitherto exercised. Hyde Chapel people decided to "go it alone." Although the break with the Village School looks rather like a sectarian move, the naming of the new School and its history make it plain that the promoters were not guilty of making the field of educational endeavour the battleground of the sects. The Day School was opened as the "Gee Cross Undenominational School" and while the management of the School remained with the Chapel practical expression was given to the spirit suggested by its name.

In 1812 two cottages were altered and added to the School buildings, and in 1900 the present School was built at a cost of £3,000. In 1905, under the provisions of the Education Act of 1902, the control of the Day School passed to the local Education Authority, although the building remains within the ownership of the Chapel and continues to be the meeting place of the Sunday School and the numerous Hyde Chapel organisations.

Headmasters of the School who are remembered by people now living are spoken of with great respect, but their names are less frequently heard than that of an assistant teacher, William Woolley, who in the locality and some distance beyond it gained a modest fame as a composer of hymn tunes. He made 47 contributions to *Hymns and Choral Songs*, published by the Northern Sunday School Federation, and although he died 43 years ago, it would be deemed unseemingly to let a Whit-Friday Walk in Gee Cross come and go without singing "From year to year in love we meet" to his tune "Anniversary."

FLOWERS AND LEAVES

By Joyce Hazlehurst

There are many legends about flowers; how they came into existence or obtained their names. One of the most delightful is about the cowslip or "St. Peter's Herb." St. Peter was busy guarding the front gate of heaven, when the news reached him that souls were entering by the back door! In his agitation St. Peter dropped his keys, which fell to earth. Where they dropped, there sprang up flowers (cowslips) known in German as "the keys of heaven."

This pretty story arose, presumably, from the cowslips' shape, which does resemble a bunch of keys. But what do the cowslips' *leaves* resemble? And is there any pretty story about them? I have never heard of any, nor about any flowers' leaves. It is the flower that draws our admiration and attention, yet the leaves do most of the work. They draw in food from the air, separating carbon dioxide from oxygen and giving the oxygen

back. They store this food in various parts of the plant to last it through the winter. When all this work is done, the leaves shrivel and fall off, yet not in such a way that the stem "bleeds." Instead, every tube of sap between leaves and stem is carefully sealed before the parting. Even when the leaves reach the ground, their duties are not over. They sink into the earth and form soft mould to nurture further growth.

Selfless, hardworking leaves! How little we appreciate you! We call you "dull" and throw you away from our vases and floral arrangements. In the spring we are impatient with you, for we want to see the flowers. Yet, without you, there would be no flowers.

Leaves have their counterparts in human life. Does anyone know a leaf or two in a family...a Y.P.L...a Women's League...a Church? I do. God bless them!

HORDER CENTRES FOR ARTHRITICS

Less than two-and-a-half years ago a new charity was founded under the presidency of the late Lord Horder. The idea came from a woman who had suffered from the age of six with Still's Disease, a most crippling form of arthritis. Her life had been a long succession of partial recovery and recurrent relapses, an endless struggle against pain and disability.

Instead of surrendering to the disease, she found a purpose in life in applying the lessons of her own life for the relief of others. She wanted to see residential centres in many areas where arthritic patients of all ages could receive special treatment and help. They would include a special wing for children in the chronic stages of Still's Disease, where they could have both the best treatment, and a first-class education to enable them to earn their own living in spite of physical handicaps. For grown-ups who had been told "nothing more can be done," she wanted centres where they could stay two or three months, and be helped to become useful and happy members of the community instead of becoming more dependent and introspective each day. For homeless arthritics there would be a special wing where they could have their own possessions, and feel "wanted."

This far-sighted charity has set itself a first target of £100,000 and is looking for some generous person to give a house in a suitable position to accommodate about 50 patients and the necessary staff. The secretary is Miss Bochenek, 17, Rugby Mansions, Bishop King's Road, London, W.14.

HANGING SIGNS

A Warning

Rev. H. Lismer Short writes from Oxford with reference to the article in our April issue suggesting that churches might adopt hanging signs instead of conventional noticeboards. He says: "No hanging sign may be installed without permission of the Planning Authority, and it will not normally be given in a residential neighbourhood. Banks often have hanging signs, but have to apply in every case."

ARE YOU?

I read
In a book
Where a man
Called Jesus
Went about doing good.

It is
Very disconcerting
To me
That I am so easily
Satisfied
With just
Going about.

Anon.

MINISTERS' STIPENDS

Concern Over Their Adequacy

One of the matters to come before the General Assembly this year is the revised scale for minimum stipends for ministers. During the past two years since an increased minimum stipend was recommended, there has been another sharp rise in the cost of living . The recommendation before the Assembly Council has been to bring the minimum scale for ministers who have served the denomination for five years from £450 to £500, plus house free of rent and rates, cost of telephone and certain other expenses.

Independently the Manchester District Association on the initiative of its lay members set up a sub-committee to consider stipends in their own area, and its recommendation, subsequently approved by the churches concerned involves a sliding scale. Whereas previously a minister with less than five years' service received a minimum of £375, and a minister with longer service £450, it is now provided that for the first year he should receive £410, increasing annually by £15 to £485 in his sixth year, and thereafter by £10 to £525 in his 10th and subsequent years, these amounts to be additional to the usual provision of house free of rent and rates, telephone, etc. To ease the way for congregations faced with finding extra income to meet the new scale, it is provided that for the first year the minister, whatever his length of service, shall receive the *next higher step* in the scale which will give him not less than £10 increase on his present stipend, progression thereafter being by annual increment.

Mr. Lisle Kellam, a former member of Ditchling congregation and now in Nyasaland, is bringing over a party of 12 Nyasaland Scouts to the International Jamboree at Sutton Coldfield in August.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Mayor's Shoes

Nippa and Pippa, the Wood-Folk, were sitting on the wall by the house of Mr. Schumann the cobbler. Suddenly they heard the sound of galloping hooves, and over the hill clattered a coach and four horses.

"It's the Mayor's coach," cried Nippa.

"I wonder why he's in such a hurry?" said Pippa.

They soon found out. The horses thundered down the lane; the coachman heaved on his reins, and everything skidded to a stop. The coach door flew open and a very distressed valet jumped down, followed by a roar from inside, "And hurry up about it!" The Mayor's face, redder than usual appeared at the window.

"Er—yes, your worship," said the worried man. He suddenly saw Nippa and Pippa. "Pardon me," he began, "but can you tell me where the cobbler..."

The Mayor cut him short. "If he's not outside, he'll be inside. Cobbler! Cobbler!" he yelled.

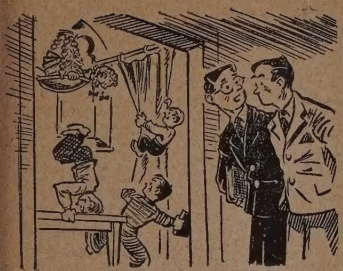
Mr. Schumann appeared, somewhat displeased. "What is it?" he asked, testily. "Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor. Er—what is it you wish?"

"My shoes, cobbler," moaned the Mayor. "My best shoes. I sent them for repair. I've just got a message that the King himself is in this part of the country and will be calling at the Town Hall in..." he looked at a huge watch. "Why, bless my life, he'll be there now! On my doorstep and no shoes or Mayor to greet him! Cobbler, where are they?"

Mr. Schumann was puzzled. "But Mr. Mayor, you've got them."

"I've not got them; I'm in my stockinged feet."

"But I sent them back yesterday, repaired and parcelled up."



. . . and we are proud to think that some of our scholars have gone up in the world.

The Mayor let out a cry of despair. He pointed to the sign over the door and turned to his valet. "Schumann!" he shouted, "Schumann! It's the cobbler's name. *You* told me that parcel must be music I thought it odd at the time. I don't know A sharp from B flat. They're there all the time waiting for me to put them on!" He bundled the wretched valet into the coach which disappeared over the hill in a very short time.

"What a fuss!" said Nippa.

"Yes," replied Pippa, "especially since we know that the King isn't due until *next* Friday!"

NEWS AND VIEWS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As this issue had to go to press long before the General Assembly meetings in Birmingham began, no report is possible. It is gratifying to learn that more congregations are now arranging that their delegates give a report of the Assembly Meetings soon after their return. Some congregations hold special meetings to receive and discuss a report, which is as it should be. This year Sheffield District Women's League again arranged for a motor coach of representatives to go to the Women's League Annual Meeting in Assembly Week in Birmingham.

THE CHURCHES

BRIGHTON. The annual Women's League service was held on April 7th in the evening, conducted by the National President, Miss Margaret Stevenson.

DUKINFIELD has found that more members would like to contribute flowers "in memoriam" than there are appropriate dates available, and so is arranging that flowers may be provided for the chapel font as well as for the communion table, and so more than one family may bring flowers for one date.

FLOWERY FIELD reports an increase in its morning Children's Church, and in the Y.P.L. which was formed last year.

GATEACRE. The Sunday School came second to SOUTHPORT at the Liverpool District Sunday Schools Arts and Crafts Festival in March in the contest for the R.E.Y.D. trophy. The Women's League have provided a new floor-covering for the vestry, and Mr. Potter has given a modern electric fire.

GLOUCESTER. On two Sundays in January a breakdown of the organ led to unaccompanied singing throughout the service, which was successfully and effectively maintained. Repairs have since been effected, but the organ needs new bellows, and the possibility of an electric blower is being canvassed.

GODALMING. At the annual general meeting the resignation of Mr. E. W. Verstage as treasurer after 40 years service was accepted with very great regret. In 1955 Mr. Verstage resigned the office of secretary after 54 years. To mark the completion of 20 years ministry at Meadrow Chapel, the chairman, Mr. Dendy Evershed, presented to the Rev. G. Mabel Beames a coffee table, a small armchair and a travelling bag, wishing her many

more happy years with the congregation.

HINCKLEY. The Envelope Offertory scheme has now started. The Sunday School has been re-organised, and monthly preparation classes are being started. £50 was voted to the Chapel by the Sunday School from its funds.

ILFORD has now started a weekly family service in the morning with a Sunday School. A monthly four-page quarto calendar has taken the place of the small size quarterly calendar.

LEEDS. Members from BRADFORD joined the young people of MILL HILL CHAPEL at the evening service which they conducted on Youth Sunday, March 3rd.

LIVERPOOL. The DOMESTIC MISSION, Mill Street, has launched an appeal for £7,500 for the restoration of its war-damaged premises, the chapel itself having been made completely unusable. The amount of £2,700 has already been raised, and £3,000 is available from war-damage insurance. ULLET ROAD congregation has started a Children's Church at morning service, with a membership roll of 12 to start with.

MANCHESTER. The Annual Meeting of the District Association was held in CROSS STREET CHAPEL on March 26th. After a short devotional service conducted by the visiting speaker, Mr. John Ratcliffe, of Stalybridge, President of the Sunday School Association, refreshments were served by the Cross Street Women's League, and then, when the business had been conducted with great despatch, Mr. Ratcliffe gave a very forthright and challenging address entitled "Move the world with your hands," pleading for much more active interest and help in Sunday School work. Several questions were asked in discussion before Mr. Ratcliffe had to leave for Stalybridge where he had arranged another engagement at 9.45 p.m.

Other annual meetings include that of ALTRINCHAM congregation held on a Saturday after a congregational tea, where encouraging reports were received from the institutions. The men of the congregation held their annual week-end on April 6th and 7th, with a potato-pie supper on the Saturday and a very varied film show in colour with synchronised sound on travel and local events, and some talkie comedy items. Sixty bunches of primroses were distributed by the May Queen at the Mothering Sunday afternoon service. BLACKLEY members were introduced to the art of rock 'n' roll at their Congregational Party in March, and enjoyed a potato-pie supper. The Y.P.L. is making progress. CHORLTON has amended its conditions of church membership, admitting those who join the envelope offertory scheme to full membership of the church. Admission to Junior Membership was lowered from a minimum of 16 years to 12. Mothering Sundey was observed by the scholars and a Spring Fair was held on April 6th. GORTON have held a successful Children's Concert. OLDHAM members accompanied their minister, the Rev. T. E. Nuttall, to give a service in one of the wards at Boundary Park Hospital at 8 p.m. on Sunday March 3rd. WYTHENSHAWE Annual Meeting on March 16th was followed by a well-attended social, at which the Nativity Film was shown for the second time. The Rose Queen conducted the Sunday School Mothering Sunday service, at which an address was given by Mrs. M. H. Grundy, of Styal, whose visit was much enjoyed. Twenty-five bunches of primroses were distributed to the children to give to their mothers.

OXFORD. The worshippers at the Sunday morning service at Manchester College have now formed themselves into an organised society, with the assistance of the College Principal, the Rev. L. A. Garrard, and the Rev. H. L. Short.

They have improved attendance at the services very considerably by this step, and vigorous life is being shown. A "Children's Chapel" is conducted concurrently with the service, and great interest is being shown in the weekly meeting of two societies, the Priestley Society for residents in Oxford and the Schweitzer Society for members of the University.

STAND. Two legacies, each of £291 18s. 6d. have been made to the Chapel and Sunday School respectively by the late Frank and Helena Ramsbottom. Good entries for the annual Exhibition of Arts and Crafts are recorded.

TROWBRIDGE. The "Talent Scheme" for 1956 raised the record amount of £90 and a supper to celebrate it was held in February. At the Sunday School party in January each child was presented with a book.

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Mrs. Freeman, of Oldham, was presented with a leather handbag in March by the Sewing Society to mark 21 years continuous service as secretary.

Mr. Harry Crowther, of Leeds, who appeared in our series of "Unitarian Stalwarts" three years ago, has celebrated his 94th birthday.

At Renshaw Street Mission, Manchester, after evening service on March 31st, seven members of the congregation were presented with framed diplomas in recognition of their services to the Mission during the past 40 years or more. The presentation was made by the minister, Rev. B. L. Hopkin.

The Rev. E. Shirvell Price, M.A., of Ullet Road, Liverpool, has accepted an invitation to Bank Street, Bolton.

The Rev. Graham Short, B.A., of Glossop, has accepted an invitation to Essex Church, London.

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Applications should be forwarded before May 31st, 1957, to C. B. Holmes, 1, Parliament Street, Hull, Yorkshire, secretary to the Trustees.

Mr. Tom Wardle, Lay Pastor at Stannington, has accepted an invitation to Kendal, to take over in July.

FROST

A first-class entry in the Liverpool S.S. Festival

Light is pierced
through an iron-coloured margin of sky;
from out the rigid tree-tops
comes the soft clinking of leaves.
The hardened birds of winter search for food
on a white steel earth and find hard water;
as though the world had turned in anger against them.

No other form of life is present;
and not far away a water-pipe is burst,
and water trickles out,
only to be frozen.
A metallic symmetrical scene the suburb is;
the frost makes the once-green grass a bed of newly-made nails.
waiting for the sun.

Beryl Murphy, aged 15.

IN DUE SEASON

"A brother . . . who is about to admonish another must realise within himself five qualities before doing so, namely, those qualities that enable him to say 'In due season will I speak, not out of season. In truth will I speak, not in falsehood. Gently will I speak, not harshly. To his profit will I speak, not to his loss. With kindly intent will I speak, not in anger.'"

Buddha.

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